THE CARIBS OF THE ANTILLES
Their Present-Day Representatives on the island of Dominica

122 /127/ In the course of a recent voyage to the Antilles, on board the yacht Resolute, I had the good fortune to meet a few survivors of the Indians who inhabited part of these islands at the time of the arrival of Europeans in the New World. /These were/ the Caribs, (1)

1. One says either Caraibe or Carib.

[16] of whom a hundred of pure stock still exist, relegated to a corner of [31] Dominica. I must first of all thank M. Pierre Lebaudy for the alacrity with which he agreed to undertake the expedition which permitted us to reach the Carib territory. In addition, we found an invaluable aid in the person of the Governor of the island and a most sympathetic reception on the part of the English colony, particularly the engineer Mr. Noble, who procured horses and porters for us, and carried his kindness so far as to accompany us on our trip and serve as our guide.

Before summing up the observations I was able to make in the course of the trip, I believe it would perhaps be useful to recall in a few words who the Caribs of the Antilles were and what is known of their origin and their migrations.

101 When Christopher Columbus discovered the Lesser Antilles, he found them inhabited by Carib Indians, intrepid sailors, adept fishermen, proud, admitting no domination and justly feared by their [24] neighbors, since they had the reputation of devouring their enemies after having killed them. (2) This population made a striking con-

2. It would be from the word canibi, one of the names given the Caribs, that the term "cannibul" comes.

trast then with the peaceful Indian peoples who inhabited the large islands and who were /128/ Arawaks, or more exactly Tainos, the latter term having been reserved for the Arawaks who had emigrated to the Antilles. Indeed, the Arawaks according to present ethnographic data, were not the first inhabitants of these islands; they had supplanted there a more ancient race, about whom we have no information as yet. The Arawaks, who probably came from /130/ South

13: Hodge & Taylor N, E-5 (1930-1956) 1957
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3. Species which are believed to have medicinal [3], questionable medicinal, or magic virtues [4].

Doubtless all plant lore is on the wane, but the third class is the only one which presents serious difficulties with regard to obtaining information, at least as far as present day knowledge goes. This class of plant lore belongs now only to a few old men and women who regard such knowledge as their private property and are less willing to part with it, even for money, than a zealous housewife with her grandmother's cooking recipes.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The authors have assembled the following notes on the uses of certain plants by the Island Caribs of Dominica following independent investigations in the fields of botany and ethnography.

Intensive botanical studies in Dominica were initiated by the senior author in 1937. The following year, aided by a grant from the Gray Herbarium, and again in 1940, as a Parker Fellow of Harvard University, he made return visits to continue this work. During the period of this field work brief visits to the Carib Reserve were made during which the majority of plants on which this publication is based were collected. A number of additional specimens of Carib economic plants also have been collected and forwarded from Dominica by the junior author.

Research by the junior author began in Dominica in 1930 and since 1938 the island has been his home. Visits to the Carib Reserve have been frequent, and the results of some of his ethnographical studies appear as citations in the bibliography of this work (52 - 63).

In this contribution the International Rules governing botanical nomenclature have been followed. Certain binomials which have appeared in basic West Indian floras are no longer accepted by botanists as valid names. These have been included in synonomy. The plant families follow the arrangement

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[3] Many of these are still used and so are enumerated in the pages that follow, but some apparently have been long forgotten. Among the latter is one given by DuTERTRE (15) under the Carib name, *ribélici*. BRETON (7) describes it as « a real reed (jonc) » whose needle-thin roots thicken at intervals like the big beads of a rosary. One of these, when crushed, will bring about a « painless accouchement... more than one would injure the child ». *Ribélici* sounds as though it has some of the botanical characteristics of an *Eleocharis* but the authors know of no plant like it from Dominica. However, BRETON also calls *Isolepis prolifera* a « jonc » so it is difficult to know what kind of plant to look for.

[4] The rarer the plant the more marvelous are its properties as a charm among the Island Caribs. In fact certain species like the *ouvette de montagne* are so rare that they appear to exist only in legend.